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## Helping employees get to work

Tech firms dominate list of commuter-friendly businesses

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**WASHINGTON (MarketWatch) -- More companies are making the job of getting to your desk a bit easier and less painful on the pocketbook, with high-tech firms dominating this year's list of commuter-friendly places to work.**

At the top of the list, released Wednesday, is Intel Corp. ([INTC](#)

) . Microsoft Corp. ([MSFT](#)

) came in second followed by a tie for third place between Google Inc. ([GOOG](#)

) and Oracle Corp. ([ORCL](#)

)

The report, sponsored by the Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency, highlights companies that offer employees free or subsidized transit passes, subsidies for carpooling or using a van pool, the option to telecommute and a compressed work week. This year 133 companies made the list, up from 91 a year ago.

The companies are ranked by the percentage of their total U.S. work force eligible for



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commuter benefits. This figure is calculated by dividing the number of employees working at sites where benefits are offered by a company's total U.S. work force.

Tech companies dominate the top ranks of the list from software manufacturers to microchip firms.

"Many technology companies tend to offer more telework benefits and compressed work schedules. This is usually because of the nature of their operations and the competitive nature of the industry, which may help spur these companies to be more aggressive in offering upgraded and innovative benefits," said Roxanne Smith, a spokeswoman for the EPA.

The report called Intel "a leader in commute-related benefits," noting that the company offers workers access to van pools and transit subsidies. The microchip maker also supports flexible work arrangements, allowing 40% of its employees to telecommute.

All full-time Microsoft employees in the Seattle area receive a free pass that pays for commutes on certain public transit lines. The software giant also offers a \$65 van-pool subsidy.

Companies rounding out the top 10 include, Yahoo Inc. ([YHOO](#)

) , Cisco Systems Inc. ([CSCO](#)

) , Sun Microsystems Inc. ([SUNW](#)

) , Texas Instruments Inc. ([TXN](#)

) and Applied Materials Inc. ([AMAT](#)

)

Yahoo began providing free Wi-Fi-ready commuter shuttles for employees traveling between its offices in San Francisco, Sunnyvale, and Santa Clara in 2005. Google offers a similar shuttle service to employees living in the San Francisco area who do not live near transit and want to avoid driving to work.

### **The costs of commuting**

Commuting is a major part of the work day for most Americans and roadway congestion costs the country \$63.1 billion in wasted time and fuel annually, according to the government. Roughly 27% of the miles logged behind the wheel in the U.S. are spent driving to and from work, according to the National Household Transportation Survey.

About 1,600 U.S. work sites offer employees at least one type of commuter benefit. The most common benefit offered by employers is a transit subsidy, with roughly 2.1 million employees receiving this perk.

Government tax policies help soften the cost to companies and employees. Currently employers can offer workers up to \$100 a month in tax-free benefits for transit and van-pool passes. Employees can also set aside up to \$100 a month pretax to cover their transit or carpool expenses. Neither the employer nor the employee pays a payroll or income tax on the set-aside.

Programs that encourage workers to reduce the number of vehicles on the road also reduce oil consumption and result in fewer vehicles spewing tailpipe emissions. U.S. employees participating in these programs have saved 389 million gallons of fuel and 3.4 million metric tons of carbon dioxide from 2001 to 2005, according to the agencies.

Commuters can search for commuter benefits offered by companies included in the survey on the Web at <http://www.bwc.gov/index.htm>.

Employees can also locate commuter friendly companies by state at <http://www.bwc.gov/campaign/index.htm>.



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